

# The Local Line

"A PPA Award Winning Publication"

The Official Voice of the  
Northwest Illinois Area Local

## Local Update by Jackie Engelhart

### Thanks "O"

"O" is Olivia Norman, our Tour 1 Chief Steward at Palatine for the last few years. She recently resigned from this position due to a disagreement with a member, where she felt that Vice President Baskin and I did not back her up. The member had words with Olivia about their discipline case, and told Olivia how he/she thought she should handle it. Olivia called us to let us know we would probably be getting a call from this member, and we did. The member was upset and insisted that someone else handle the grievance. We agreed that Dave take over the grievance from Olivia and when Dave told her, she resigned. This was never a case of the (Chief) Steward not doing her job, but a case of the employee being very "upset" and having "words" with her. Dave and I both apologized to Olivia, and we asked her to reconsider her resignation. The final irony is that O had discussed the grievance and resolved it before she resigned.

### Steward Complaints

This story highlights the problem in doing what Dave and I did. When a member calls us we are hearing their side, and we cannot make a decision without first hearing both sides. If you have a problem with your steward, talk to them first. The next person to speak to would be the Chief Steward and then the Craft Director. When a member calls me or Dave we will listen, but if you have not talked to the Chief Steward and/or the Craft Director then you have not given them the courtesy to inform them of a problem on their tour and /or in their craft. Whether or not you think they will agree with you and/or resolve the problem, give them the courtesy of talking to them. If the member had gone back and talked to Olivia the next day, this entire mess could have been avoided. Dave and I should have talked to Olivia before taking any action, and we have lost an excellent Chief Steward because we didn't.

### Thanks VOE

We can all thank VOE for telling management how truly bad some of our bad offices are. The worst plant (surprise) in the Northern Illinois District is Palatine P&DC. After years of treating EAS and craft employees with disrespect, senior management has sown the seeds of the current (Quarter 1) VOE score of 48.3 points. Lowlights include a score of 34 for Dignity & Respect and 30 for Communication. This information is contained in the "FY '08 Quarter 1 VOE Trends & Analysis Report" from the Workplace Environment Improvement office. The report identifies the worst and best offices, and calls the worst offices "Vital Few or Greatest Opportunity" offices. Rockford was the best plant with a score of 68.1 or 20 points better than Palatine. Mike Cleary is the Plant Manager at Rockford and he is very decent to work with. This report confirms what we have been saying and hearing at Palatine from EAS and craft alike.

## Floor Edition

January 21, 2008  
Jackie Engelhart  
President  
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### Thanks "O"

### Steward Complaints

### Thanks VOE

### Palatine Action (Panic) Plan

### Northern IL District Worst VOE in the Great Lakes Area.

### The Mystery at Glen Ellyn AO VOE Hall of Shame

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### **Palatine Action (Panic) Plan**

On 1-7-07 senior management tasked Tim Anderson to "develop an action plan to address the declining VOE scores at Palatine." Tim had been on a long-term detail at Irving Park Road Facility (IPR) but since IPR returned to the Chicago District in October, Northern IL District Managers have left IPR. Tim is now detailed as the Senior MDO for the vacationing A/Senior MDO Danny Bracket. Tim's assignment is to improve morale (in two weeks) at a plant where morale has been ignored for years. The good thing about VOE is that it shines a spotlight on an otherwise ignored problem, and in a form that senior management cares about because it's part of their score. We have talked to management over and over about the lack of dignity and respect and the lack of communication. These complaints fall on deaf ears as the same supervisors continue to generate the same complaints. Dignity and respect and communication are a luxury these managers do not think they can afford and still get the mail out. Their jobs depend on getting the mail out, not on how they treat employees. Management has been conducting quarterly VOE Surveys for years, and yet the workplace environment in many places continues to deteriorate. Senior Management talks about VOE participation and how important it is for them to know what they need to improve, but where is the improvement. Tim has some good suggestions, such as communicate changes with the employees as soon as known. He is also calling for the Supervisor to conduct the VOE with MDO involvement.

### **Northern IL District has the Worst VOE in the Great Lakes Area.**

The District improved to 59.6 but is now in last place because Chicago improved 2.4 points to 59.8. Our new District Manager Robert Hart speaks very positively about "treating employees like gold" but that view has not translated into action around the District. Carol Stream is 10 points higher than Palatine but 10 points lower than Rockford. CS Plant Manager Greg Johnson does seem to care about employee morale.

### **The Mystery at Glen Ellyn**

Glen Ellyn is the worst with a score of 35. Comments on this one are "Needs emergency help from H.R.; possibly a Climate Assessment to find out what's going on. Has the biggest drop in scores (minus 23.6 points). Nonexistent recognition (0); very low Dignity & Respect (10) and Communication (10) scores. I checked my Postmaster list to see if the Postmaster was who I thought it would be and it was. He was the OIC at Northbrook for awhile and he had the office in turmoil (Clerks & Carriers) until he left. How could they not know that this manager create a backlash wherever he goes? They titled him at Glen Ellyn a year ago, and now they need "a Climate Assessment to find out what's going on." Either they do not want to face the truth or they are not "smarter than a fifth grader".

### **AO VOE Hall of Shame**

There are several NWIAL AO's in the VOE Hall of Shame and coincidentally, they all were targeted for excessing by the District. Lake Forest had an overall score of 40.8, with a 6 for Recognition, a 16 for Dignity & Respect and a 16 for Communication. Glenview had 43.4 overall, with 9, 30, and 36 in same categories. Mount Prospect had 46.7 with same category scores of 18, 27 and 27.

### **WEA Analysis**

WEA is the Workplace Environment Analyst, and he has made a list of suggestions for management to improve their VOE scores. They run the gamut from publicizing the success stories to sending managers and supervisors with unacceptable dignity & respect and communication scores for communications training. I'm sure these are all good suggestions, but they don't solve the basic problem. Senior management expects their subordinates to improve service scores and get the mail out as they continually cut staffing. Is it a coincidence that the worst NWIAL VOE offices have had excessing? When the pressure is on, aren't communication and dignity and respect the first to go?

### **Next VOE Survey Any Day**

APWU is against VOE participation for several reasons. One is that management tried to use our satisfaction with pay & benefits to argue against a pay raise. Another reason is that VOE is regarded as an attempt to circumvent the union. What improvements have you seen as a result of filling out the VOE? Is management listening to your concerns and correcting anything? Do you think they care about your opinion or just the score? Their action plan is to improve the score but what about the actual work environment? If you are at a bad VOE office has anyone from management come to talk to you about problems in your office? If VOE is such a concern why wait until 3 weeks before the next survey to address the (problem) scores?